Street Corner Society and leadership

In Whyte’s *Street Corner Society* the nature of leadership as a “gang” leader, social club leader, racketeer, and politician are examined. Each of these has different issues but all of them have similar characteristics.

The leader has obligations to the followers and needs to be available to the followers.

* The corner boy leader Doc (“gang” leader) makes the decisions on what activity the group should engage in. If he has money, he needs to spend it on his “boys.”
* The racketeer collects the payoffs from the number running from his underlings, but he also covers their large payouts and makes the calls to get them out of jail if they are arrested.
* The politician tells the story of his similarity with the “common” man and has an open door policy. His constituents can visit him at anytime.

Systems have their own ways of acting. A power in one system does not mean influence or power in another system. For example, when the men were not allowed to play baseball in the park because they kept breaking the neighboring bank’s windows, they requested a fence to be erected. No amount of persuasion on the park director was effective. But, when they applied persuasion to the politicians, the politicians could apply the pressure to the park director.

As in Gardner’s book *Leading Minds,* the political leader engaged in story telling, telling the community story of rising up against oppression as his own story, linking himself to the people of the community.